Critical Theory

The term ‘critical theory’ is generally associated with the group of German social theorists affiliated with the Institute for Social Research. Founded in Frankfurt in 1923, the Institute sought to conduct social research that would examine the contradictions of modernity, interrogate the limits of the present order, and overcome the limitations of modern social and philosophical thought. In pursuing these objectives, the ‘Frankfurt School’ (as the founders and early staff of the Institute came to be known) built on the combined foundations of Marxism, idealist philosophy and psychoanalysis as well as empirically oriented sociology.

The core members of the early Frankfurt School included Max Horkheimer, long-time director of the Institute, Theodore Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse. While the label ‘critical theory’ is sometimes used synonymously with their work (and they sometimes claimed to be the only truly critical theorists of their generation), it is misleading to use the label for the Frankfurt School exclusively. This makes critical theory appear to be much more rigid and fixed than it ever was or can be. Not only are there innovations by new generations of theorists—as with any vital theoretical tradition—the Frankfurt School founders insisted on a conception of critical theory as always embedded in processes of historical change, providing both an analytical perspective on the present and a lever on the future. In this, Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse were all influenced by Marx's dictum that ‘the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world … the point, however, is to change it’ (Marx, 1978: 145). Changing the world, as Marx had argued, did not imply rejecting theoretical enquiry in favor of action, but rather overcoming that opposition. The idea of theory, Frankfurt theorists argued, needed to be recovered from a cerebral and abstract philosophical tradition that failed to challenge the social status quo; it needed to be made useful in movements that would bring about radical and liberatory social change.

From the Enlightenment on, philosophers and social theorists drew an opposition between tradition and modernity. This tended, however, to present modernity too simply and universally, as though it were internally homogenous and moved in only one direction. In the dialectical tradition of Hegel and Marx, the Frankfurt School argued that modernity was internally complex and even contradictory. It was necessary to grasp it as an unfolding of contradictory potentials in history which included Nazism and Stalinism as well as the rise of democracy and science. Speaking of history here means both being specific about differences within modernity and seeing theory itself as part of history, shaped by the conditions under which it is developed.

This is one reason why critical theory should not be identified exclusively with the original Frankfurt theorists. It is a more general project of reflection on the possibilities and realities of modernity in which a wider range of theorists participate. In the first place, the original Frankfurt theorists were often divided on important questions—especially the potential for revolutionary change. They also engaged closely with contemporaries such as Walter Benjamin, who were never strictly part of the Institute for Social Research. A second generation of the Frankfurt School—including most famously Jiirgen Habermas, but also Albrecht Wellmer and others—has directly and provocatively engaged earlier Frankfurt School work. A third generation has risen to prominence with theorists like Axel Honneth in Germany and Seyla Benhabib in the United States. But the project of critical theory—and aspects of the direct legacy of the original Frankfurt School – shapes a much wider range of work. In its broader sense, critical theory shares important ground with analyses of totalizing social processes and epochal change by Michel Foucault and François Lyotard, with Pierre Bourdieu's efforts to theorize the relationship between human action and the reproduction of social order, and with Jacques Derrida's critical approach to philosophical history.

This chapter focuses most intensively on the original Frankfurt School, partly because other chapters in the present book take up many of the relevant later theorists. We emphasize on the first generation of Frankfurt School critical theorists and their core ideas and contributions. We stress the interdisciplinary nature of the Institute's work, which tried—not always successfully—to create a framework for integrating philosophy, psychology, cultural criticism and empirical sociology.[1] The second section considers direct extensions of the Frankfurt School legacy, especially in the work of Habermas. The third considers the relationship of critical theory to Foucault, Bourdieu and other figures of postmodernism and post-structuralism.

Frankfurt School Foundations

Though the Frankfurt theorists saw philosophy as limited by both its distance from social action and its distance from empirical enquiry, they drew heavily on conceptions of critique embedded in German philosophical traditions. Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche were all important alongside Marx, Weber, and Freud. In this tradition, ‘critique’ means not simply criticism, but rather a deep examination of the conditions under which any particular form of thinking could operate. Four dimensions of this project are crucial.

First, the conditions of knowledge itself are not self-evident but must be examined critically. While we certainly gain knowledge of the world from our senses, critical theory insists that this is hardly the whole story. Our visual sense organs respond differently to stimuli from different wavelengths of light. This is the basis for our perception of color. But in itself, it doesn't tell us how to divide the colors from each other – where, for example, blue shades into turquoise or teal. These distinctions depend on language and on social learning that guides the use of language. Similarly, we can gain knowledge of mathematics with a kind of purity and certainty that is different from knowledge of the empirical world (though even mathematics does not allow perfect certainty and freedom from arbitrariness or contradiction). We also mean something different by ‘knowing’ an empirical fact like the number of pages in a book and ‘knowing’ whether a painting is beautiful or an action ethically right. The latter are examples of judgement and ‘practical reason’ that can be better or worse without necessarily being true or false. All this is important to various kinds of empirical and theoretical enquiry. Its specific importance for critical theory lies in the fact that human beings see the same empirical world, but use different languages, concepts, ideologies, and theories to understand it. Critical theory includes as part of its task the effort to analyse the effects of these different ways of knowing and judging the world.

Secondly, critical analysis reveals that reality itself is not simply a matter of surface appearances but of underlying causes and conditions, which are not adequately understood by empirical generalization. Theoretical analysis is required in order to understand why things are one way and not another—why for example capitalism predominates in the contemporary world, or why people rely on courts to resolve disputes. A critical understanding of the world as it exists is necessarily historical. It considers the conditions necessary for any particular patterns—biological or physical as well as social—to have arisen and persisted. In the case of society, this critical perspective is especially important, for it reveals the omnipresence of change, and thus the potential for the social world to be reshaped by social action. Capitalism, thus, is not simply a fact of nature but the result of historical processes. A key aspect of the Frankfurt School approach involved using critical theory to uncover ‘reification’, or the tendency for products of human action to appear as though they were ‘things’, products of nature rather than human choices.[2]

Thirdly, based in part on the first two senses of critique, critical theory seeks to analyse social theory itself in terms of the basic categories of understanding different theories employ. Theory develops historically not simply by rejecting earlier efforts, but by analysing them and uncovering their limits. It is in this sense that Marx subtitled his major work, *Capital*, ‘a critique of political economy’. Marx did not mean simply a criticism, but rather an examination of classical political economy (the economics of his day) that sought to reveal the basic categories used and their limits. Through such an analysis, a critical theorist seeks not only to develop a better theory, one which can incorporate the advances of previous theory as well as innovations, but also to explain why other theories reached limits they could not transcend. Critical theory thus sees scientific theory in historical terms, not as uncovering timeless truths, but as analysing an ever-changing world by means of intellectual categories that may prove more or less adequate to grasping what is going on. Where such categories reflect an affirmation of the status quo, or of certain powerful interests, they may be criticized as ideologically biased. More generally, though, there are potential limits to the adequacy of all categories, and things they will obscure even while they reveal others.[3] For this reason, the critical theorist seeks always to apply this same sort of critical analysis to his or her own theoretical inheritance and work.

Fourthly, critical theory is shaped by a critical engagement with society. This means not simply that critical theorists have preferences and offer opinions about society. Rather, it means that critical theory seeks to achieve a unity of theory and practice (which the early Frankfurt Theorists followed Marx in calling *praxis)*. Critical theory is thus developed with the knowledge that it is an action in society, not some kind of external view on society. Indeed, a central point of critical theory is that all scientific work is located inside society, not outside. Some social scientists pretend that their standpoints, histories, bases in social institutions and political engagements don't matter, but critical theory suggests that this is never altogether true. The task for social science is not to cut itself off from society, but to make explicit and criticizable the social bases on which it stands.[4] Critical theorists try to study topics that are of direct social importance, not of 'purely academic' interest, and to do so in ways that enable critical awareness to become more widespread. They try to offer less distorting, clearer and more adequate categories for understanding social phenomena.

The first generation of Frankfurt School critical theorists always insisted on the historical embeddedness of theory. They recurrently criticized those who presented theory as though it could adopt a position outside of history, and those who imagined that theory would somehow explain social change without itself being transformed by it. This was especially important for a theory that sought direct involvement in processes of social change. Looking at the world around them in the 1930s, Horkheimer and Adorno concluded, for example, that Nazism and Stalinism closed off certain historical possibilities—including the older Marxist idea of class struggle and proletarian revolution. Indeed, the experience of totalitarianism, the war against it and exile in America left Horkheimer and Adorno extremely pessimistic about the immediate prospects for radical social change. They took solace in considering their work a heritage (a 'message in a bottle') on which other theorists could build when changing historical conditions opened new possibilities. Like history itself, theoretical enquiry would remain open-ended.

All the Frankfurt theorists recognized the crisis that the rise of totalitarianism represented for Marxist theory. With the victories of Stalinism and Nazism, Marxist social theorists were confronted with seemingly incontestable evidence that the working class, long held to be the vehicle of social emancipation, had contributed to these disasters of Western civilization. Moreover, totalitarianism signaled the apparent demise not only of

Marxism's liberatory promises, but also, in their view, those of liberalism and more generally the Enlightenment. Much of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse's work of the late 1930s is an attempt to reconcile Marxism with this outcome, reconceiving the history of capitalism without the radically oppositional social position previously attributed to the working class.

Important, too, was the experience of exile in America, where the Frankfurt School relocated in 1934 after Hitler's rise to power. There, the relative integration and accommodation of working-class radicalism suggested the efficacy of other, less direct ways of suppressing social contradictions. Over time, the analysis of totalitarianism and American capitalism led the Frankfurt School away from the Marxist preoccupation with modes of production, class struggle, and the primacy of the economy toward a much more global and ultimately pessimistic cultural analysis. This centered on a critical analysis of the ways in which reason, a source of liberation in Enlightenment thought, had been harnessed to a project of rationalization that was potentially imprisoning. Indebted to Max Weber's image of an ‘iron cage’ of instrumental rationality, they analysed the ways in which both bureaucratic states and large-scale capitalism limited human potential. This led them to develop theories of the administered society. Tensions between government and capitalist corporations could be reduced and the two sides could collaborate in using techniques of mass persuasion (political campaigns, advertising) to create a population that sought material gains within the existing system rather than a more fundamental liberation from it. This new system allowed people to participate and feel that they had choices as consumers (of political candidates as well as industrial products), but the choices were limited by the emergence of mass culture and the deployment of its instruments by states and corporations. The limited choices offered only discouraged the development of real opposition to the existing order.

The key point of reference for these critiques was the reduction of the broad human capacity for reason to an instrument of domination—over nature, and increasingly over human beings. Enlightenment thinkers had seen reason as full of promise, because they thought people would use their reason to critically analyse all existing social institutions and create better ones. Subsequent history, however, showed capitalism and the state successfully harnessing reason to merely technical tasks in production and government. Instead of using reason to emancipate people from power relations and the constraints of material necessity, the dominant forces in society had created new institutions and processes – states, markets, that seemed beyond the control of human actors and increasingly beyond their power to critique or challenge them. People felt helpless before giant global corporations and capitalist markets as before totalitarian states – and indeed, this very feeling of helplessness and alienation was one of the reasons why people willingly acquiesced to totalitarian governments. The Frankfurt School sought to demonstrate how the liberation that might have attended the growth of human power had turned against itself, producing the horrors of the twentieth century.

This was the essence of Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of the Enlightenment and the culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1987). The problem was a simple one: 'the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant' (1987: 3). This contradiction underwrote much of the Frankfurt School work, from Freudian-inspired connections between paternal authority and fascism to Marcuse's later vision of one-dimensional society. And yet their writing constantly, if not always consistently, struggles against this totalization, seeking to identify resources for critique and social transformation. Here, despite obvious differences in scale, belong Adorno's interest in negative dialectics and the critical, Utopian energy of modern art, Marcuse's hopes for a culture-wide 'desublimation' of libido, and Walter Benjamin's attention to the possibility of historical ruptures. The work of Jiirgen Habermas is perhaps the dominant contemporary articulation of this search for liberatory resources, extending the analysis of the systemic integration of modern society, while reestablishing the consideration of emancipatory human agency and ethics.

In analysing these issues, the Frankfurt School developed a strongly interdisciplinary approach that drew from a range of sources, including Marxism, psychoanalysis, German idealism, romanticism, art history and aesthetics. The major early figures were somewhat less attentive to political economy, although Frankfurt School members such as Friedrich Pollack and Franz Neumann made important contributions in these areas.

Two broad issues will open up much of this complexity in the next pages: first, the constant concern among the Frankfurt critical theorists for the negative moment of social critique—the negation of the status quo that Marx had assigned to the proletariat, but which the Frankfurt theorists had enormous difficulty in attributing to any historical actors of the day. This inability had consequences not only for the prospects of social change but for the status of critical theory itself, which often self-reflexively examined the isolated character of modern intellectual activity. Negation would become a major subject of contention, too, in theories of post-structuralism and postmodernism, as we shall see.

The second issue is a recurring historical dynamic in the work of the Frankfurt theorists: the progressive loss of the structures that mediated between the individual and systems of economic, cultural and political power, to the point that individuality becomes a simple extension of integrated social forces. The early Frankfurt theorists explained the rise and efficacy of totalitarianism in terms of the emergence of increasingly direct forms of domination—forms that ruthlessly eliminated other sites of authority and resources for autonomy such as class, the family and law. Only the state, and its condensed expression in cults-of-personality remained. In their postwar work, the Frankfurt theorists extended this general principle toward the analysis of liberal society and the culture industry, crediting the latter with a dismaying power to channel diverse individual desires and needs into fundamentally equivalent consumer choices. Such analysis illuminates another of the Frankfurt School imperatives: the need to treat the present constellation of social power and human possibility as the product of historical and fundamentally human forces, in the hope that recognizing the roots of the present situation will allow people to identify and overcome its limits. Drawing on a long tradition of démystification from Marx to Nietzsche and Freud, critical theory has consistently opposed the reification of the present into an inevitable, natural order. At its best, it is a challenge to take the future seriously.

Kant and Reason

In essays published in the Institute's journal *Zeitschrift* in the mid and late 1930s, Frankfurt School theorists, especially Horkheimer and Marcuse, began to reflect on the specificity and mission of critical theory—Horkheimer's term for their work. These program statements investigated the possibilities and limitations of contemporary social critique, and turned on the differences between critical theory and what Horkheimer called ‘traditional philosophy’. Kant figures prominently in these investigations as the philosopher *par excellence:* both the thinker who culminates the philosophical agenda of Enlightenment, bringing reason fully to bear on the question of human consciousness, and the first representative of philosophical enquiry into the conditions of the age. For theorists as diverse as Michel Foucault and Jiirgen Habermas this reflective turn is still seen as effectively inaugurating philosophical modernity.

For the Frankfurt theorists, Kant culminates Enlightenment thought on a number of fronts. He reduces the notion of selfhood to a minimum number of a priori logical categories which order the experience of the senses; he refounds ethics on the purely formal procedure of determining an act's compatibility with universal reason (the categorical imperative); and he justifies the break-up of reason into a series of autonomous domains—pure reason, practical reason and judgement. In so doing, Kant made reason synonymous with the proper categorizing of experience, both as a description of the self and as an ethical posture toward others—in Kantian terms, *duty*.

For Horkheimer, such a conception of ethics suffered from excessive formalism: the demand for universality had no positive content or claim on particular social arrangements; moreover it could justify diametrically opposed forms of behavior. Horkheimer and Adorno made this point in a shocking manner by juxtaposing Kant and the Marquis de Sade (the eighteenth-century contemporary who gave his name to sadism) as the two poles of the Enlightenment: ‘What Kant grounded transcendentally … Sade realized empirically’ (1987: 88). What Kant imagined as a system for achieving universal mutual respect for individuals, Sade imagined as a universal instrumentalization of the human body—of sexual domination and the free use of the other as a categorical and, as Sade demonstrated at length, infinitely categorizable imperative. Much in the same way that Hegel identified the French Revolution's exterminatory search for unanimity as the counterpoint of Kant's ethical formalism, Horkheimer and Adorno criticized Kant for undermining reason's public function—for advocating a purely subjective form of reason which abandoned the critique of irrational forms of authority and the formulation of positive goals. As Horkheimer argued, ‘When the idea of reason was conceived, it was intended to achieve more than the mere regulation of the relation between means and ends: it was regarded as the instrument for understanding the ends, for determining them’ (1992a: 38).

Instead, Kant proposed that persons possessed shared capacities, but exercised them in isolation. For Horkheimer, this view exemplified the detached role of the philosopher in bourgeois society: ‘The traditional ideal of theory is based on scientific activity as carried on within the division of labor at a particular stage in the latter's development. It corresponds to the activity of the scholar which takes place alongside all the other activities of a society but in no immediately clear connection to them’ (1992b: 241–2). As Marcuse argued, this isolation was confirmed by the philosophical preoccupation with consciousness at the expense of explaining, and potentially challenging, concrete, external forms of domination:

> In the bourgeois period, economic conditions determine philosophical thought insofar as it is the emancipated, self-reliant individual who thinks … Correspondingly, he appears in philosophy only as an abstract subject, abstracted from his full humanity … (I)n every act of cognition the individual must once again re-enact the ‘production of the world’ and the categorical organization of experience. However, the process never gets any further because the restriction of ‘productive’ cognition to the transcendental sphere makes any new form of the world impossible. The constitution of the world occurs behind the backs of the individuals; yet it is their work. (Marcuse, 1992: 15)

In other words, Kant's transcendental philosophy ‘aroused the belief that the realization of reason through factual transformation was unnecessary, since individuals could become rational and free within the established order’ (Marcuse, 1992: 7). This is an area where critical theory strongly marked its difference from philosophies of consciousness, including latter-day versions such as existentialism and phenomenology. For the critical theorists, there could be no internal freedom without external freedom.

Dialectics and Negativity

Hegelian dialectics, Horkheimer and Adorno noted, marked a major philosophical break with the linear narrative of Enlightenment progress—the ‘dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy’ that would accompany the growth of human reason. Instead, Hegel emphasized the way in which Enlightenment reason had undermined itself and produced its opposite—quintessentially in the French revolutionary terror. He contended that this outcome reflected a dialectical process of history that generated opposition and synthesis. Dialectics furnished the law of historical movement and provided a way of contextualizing the disasters of reason (as well as such apparently universal theories of selfhood as Kant's) within a larger framework of human progress. His ascription of agency in this process to a depersonalized notion of ‘Spirit’, however, and his claims in late work such as *The Philosophy of Right* that objective reason had finally been achieved in the form of the Prussian state, opened the door to a range of critiques in the 1830s and 1840s by a group of scholars known as the Young Hegelians. Most prominent among these were Marx's radical appropriation of dialectics to reveal the contradictions of capitalism and his famous materialist critique of Spirit.

Major elements of this critique remained central to the work of the Frankfurt School (and indeed, to much of the French post-structural movement) a century later. Among these was Marx's revision of the concept of *praxis*. Aristotle, in *Metaphysics*, had distinguished between three basic forms of human activity: praxis, or action which is an end in itself, including the domains of ethics and politics; poiesis, or goal-oriented action, including forms of material production; and theoria, or the production of truth. This framework structured most scientific and philosophical enquiry from the classical era through to Hegel, who continued to endorse a distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge. Post-Hegelian thinkers, however, and especially Marx, substantially revised this model, rejecting the Hegelian effort to displace the unity of practical and theoretical knowledge to a higher level of speculative reality—that of Spirit. Marx described praxis as the creative activity through which human beings created and shaped their world, over and above the labor necessary for their simple survival. Praxis, in this view, was grounded within existing social activity. Theory, insofar as it aimed at transforming society and not at speculative truth about ultimate realities, became a form of praxis.

A fundamental implication of this attack on speculative philosophy was that critique had to proceed from within society, on an *immanent* basis. Contra Hegel, Marcuse observed that ‘in [Marx's] work, the negativity of reality becomes a historical condition which cannot be hypostatized as a metaphysical state of affairs’ (1960: 314–15). Negativity—the critique of the present order—is consequently for Marx not an abstract opposition that emerges at the level of ideas, but a concrete opposition between groups—or more specifically, between classes distinguished by their relationship to the means of production. Insofar as the social order reflected the prerogatives of the owners of the means of production—the capitalists—negativity became the property of the working class, the consequence of their structural subordination.

Although the Frankfurt School had been founded with an explicit mandate to study the revolutionary potential of the German working class, Horkheimer's rise to the directorship signaled a shift toward skepticism about this structurally assigned role. The failure of the German left in the early 1930s contributed greatly to this mistrust, although related hopes for the Soviet experiment were not completely dashed—at least for Horkheimer—until the purge trials of the late 1930s. Dissatisfaction with the increasingly rigid and positivist doctrine of the Communist Party was another contributing factor. Following Engels' lead, Marxism in the early part of the century had hardened into a science of history that treated dialectics as an immutable natural logic. By returning to Marxism's foundational enquiry into the meaning and conditions of social negation, the Frankfurt School played a key role in the recovery of the philosophical dimension of Marxism—a recovery that passed through renewed interest in Hegel by Dilthey and even more significantly through Lukác's reconstruction of the theory of alienation and reification in *History and Class Consciousness*. [5]

From this perspective, the formative critical theory of the 1930s was characterized by a widening break with the Marxist account of negativity. This break presented the Frankfurt School writers with their principal theoretical dilemma: the question of whether negativity had any structural place in modern society—any inherent actor. If this was not the working class, or no longer the working class, then where was critical potential to be found? If structural negation was no longer a possibility, then what were the prospects of radical social action? This issue is one of the most significant points of differentiation among the major critical theorists. Horkheimer's early mission statement, ‘Traditional and Critical Theory’, for instance, tries to salvage working-class negativity from the increasingly stark evidence of its failure by positing an antagonistic relationship between intellectuals (such as himself) and the working class they represented: ‘even the situation of the proletariat is, in this society, no guarantee of correct knowledge … This truth becomes clearly evident in the person of the theoretician; he exercises an aggressive critique not only against the conscious defenders of the status quo but also against distracting, conformist, or Utopian tendencies within his own household …’ (1992b: 248).

Although Horkheimer tried to reincorpörate this antagonism into the Marxist concept of an intellectual vanguard of class struggle, something more fundamental than the proper role of the intellectual was at stake. The broad shift within critical theory toward instrumental reason as the motor of historical development departed from the assumptions of class struggle. No longer could liberation be conceived simply as a matter of reorganizing the relationship between workers and the means of production. The Soviet experience—which Pollack described as 'state capitalism'—was bringing into relief the larger contours of domination that survived such reorganization: the logic of technological mastery over nature and humanity alike, and the reduction of politics to a question of administration and planning. Always vague on the subject of the transition to communism, Marx's labor theory of value not only failed to account for these other dimensions, but embraced instrumentality as long as it remained in the right hands.

Here the Frankfurt theorists can be seen as integrating Marxist analysis with Max Weber's more developed sociological understanding of the state. Equally importantly, much of the Frankfurt theorists' work elaborated an account of rationalization close to Weber's own account of the loss of reason's liberatory potential and the emergence of the 'iron cage' of modernity where rationality meant only the rule-governed character of bureaucracy and the instrumental pursuit of economic gain. Like Weber, Horkheimer, Adorno and many of their colleagues saw this as a collapse of civilization, as the spiritual and aesthetic sides of human existence were sacrificed to the peculiar rationalities of state and market.

Totalitarianism and the Analysis of the State

It is no great exaggeration to see the Frankfurt School's work on mass culture and totalitarianism as an investigation of the forces that undermined negativity in modern society.[6] Marx had envisioned the development of capitalism as a process of intensifying contradiction. Capital would concentrate into fewer and fewer hands, impoverishing an ever-larger percentage of the population; increases in productivity in the form of new technologies would become ever-more costly, and productive capacities would vastly outstrip the power of internal and ultimately external markets to consume goods, leading to worsening cyclical crises of overproduction. On this basis, Marx identified the working class as the world-historical class—an increasingly powerful social force whose radical dispossession would eventually break the ideology of private property and the social order it supported. As capital concentrated in the hands of a few industrialists, the concept of private property, like Kant's notion of reason, achieved a purely formal status. As the Frankfurt theorists argued, it no longer functioned in any broad sense as the material basis for individual autonomy, as it had been in the progressive era of bourgeois society. Rather, the idea of private property mystified the difference between personal possessions and the holdings of impersonal corporations.

Totalitarianism brought this process to a culmination and delivered a decisive blow to the idea that Marx's labor theory underpinned a necessary solidarity of workers in the struggle against capitalism. The Frankfurt School theorists overwhelmingly understood this development as a further outcome of capitalism, although they differed in many particulars. They argued that as capitalism eroded the content of liberal individualism—not only property, but also the family and legal institutions—it undermined the conditions of bourgeois reason, including the basic bourgeois distinction between state and society. Classical liberalism treated society as the product of interaction and agreement among autonomous individuals, but in the mass society of the twentieth century, that kind of autonomous individual was rare. Instead, economic interdependence—with an accent on 'dependence', the opposite of autonomy—was the order of the day. The rise of the culture industry subjected what had once been realms of critical individuality to regimes of mass production. State management reached, moreover, into what had previously been considered private realms.

For the most part, the core Frankfurt School theorists focused on cultural, social psychological and philosophical concerns, which were indeed one dimension of this new pattern in modern society. Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Walter Benjamin did little empirical research into the finer grain of institutional history and other concrete developments within the capitalist era. They tended to treat state power as a special case of instrumental reason and authority as an objectification of psychological structures. The tasks of linking critical theory to political economy fell more to their colleagues in the Institute for Social Research, especially Friedrich Pollack and Franz Neumann. Other Institute writers—especially Horkheimer—used this work in support of their own, and many of its conclusions would later find a prominent place in the work of Jiirgen Habermas among others.

Pollack was a pioneer in studies of the role of the state in modern economies. Throughout the 1930s, he studied the fundamental role of state planning, not only in the Soviet communist case where five-year plans were the rule, but also in the explicitly capitalist economies, including those with democratic regimes. In Western Europe and the United States an unprecedented expansion of the state's mandate in economic affairs was under way, largely in response to capitalism's latest crisis of overproduction, the Great Depression. Increasingly, this role went beyond mere regulation—the hallmark of progressivism in the United States and still an expression of faith in the market mechanism. Instead, the state became an active and even dominant actor in determining production. For Pollack, this new role represented a dramatic politicization of the economy. The state assumed functions previously reserved for the market: the determination of prices and wages, levels of employment and unemployment, and the balancing of supply and demand. This intervention opened the door to totalitarianism, Pollack argued, insofar as it tended toward a 'command economy' in which the mediating institution of the market was abolished. In this context, social relations were determined less by one's relationship to the means of production than by one's access to the power of the state—whence the emergence of state protection rackets and other forms of economic intimidation. Such politicization was manifestly not, in Pollack's view, a stage on the road to socialism, but rather what he called 'state capitalism'—a new social form in which the monopoly power of late capitalism was appropriated by the state in order to suppress the contradictions of the system.[7] Economic planning, forced employment, technological innovation and a large, surplus-absorbing military sector, Pollack argued, provided a durable set of techniques which could prolong the new social order, perhaps indefinitely. The only clear internal weakness of such regimes, he suggested—here echoing a number of Frankfurt School analyses of Nazism—was the irrational nature of the internal struggle for power, which obeyed no efficiency principle and tended toward gangsterism.

Franz Neumann's classic study of Nazism, *Behemoth*, developed a similar line of analysis, but characterized totalitarianism as an advanced form of monopoly capitalism rather than as a new, stable social order. Although he followed Pollack in crediting totalitarianism with the erosion of the distinction between state and economy, he argued that the Nazi regime had not entirely absorbed the economy—a claim evidenced by surviving market control over the 'economic circulation' of many goods and services and by the fact that industry remained, for the most part, in private hands. Moreover, Neumann saw totalitarian measures as primarily a response to the more intense contradictions and greater instability produced by a high degree of monopolization: 'The system has become so fully monopolized that it must by nature be hypersensitive to cyclical changes, and such disturbances must be avoided … In short, democracy would endanger the fully monopolized system. It is the essence of totalitarianism to stabilize it and fortify it' (1944: 354).

Although Pollack's and Neumann's analyses shared many elements, they offered rather different evaluations of the possibility of a transformational crisis of the system—a subject of considerable importance to the Frankfurt theorists. Pollack's more pessimistic account resonated strongly with Horkheimer and Adorno, who, by the 1940s, had concluded that there was little margin for meaningful opposition in modern society. Neumann's theory of intensified contradiction, on the other hand, found an ally in Marcuse, who continued to struggle well into the 1960s with the issues of liberatory social action and privileged historical actors. Indeed, the protest movements of the 1960s were the first great wave of popular activism to challenge the social status quo since the 1930s. To some – including Marcuse—they suggested the possibility of renewing radical, emancipatory struggle for social change.

A distinctive contribution of the Frankfurt School approach to state capitalism was its effort to work out a unified explanation of modern capitalism that grasped the similarities between Soviet and Nazi totalitarianism. This was important not only for historical analyses of the mid twentieth century—showing how despite their ideological differences each totalitarian system pursued capital accumulation and exploitative productivity levels for labor—but also for understanding the importance of the state to modern capitalism generally.

The Authoritarian Personality

While others worked on political and economic dimensions of totalitarianism, the core Frankfurt School theorists were increasingly drawn to psychological and cultural analyses. The emergence of an 'authoritarian personality' was one of the Institute's dominant themes of the 1930s and 1940s, involving numerous scholars in two major empirical studies: *Studien über Autoritàt undFamilie (Studies in Authority and the Family)*, and the better-known collection of works, including *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al., 1950), that formed the *Studies in Prejudice*. Again, in this work the decline of the economic framework of bourgeois autonomy played a crucial explanatory role—not this time at the macro level of the politicization of the economy, but at a micro level which corresponded to a perceived decline in paternal authority. Here Institute scholars placed less emphasis on the repressive characteristics of the bourgeois family than on the breakdown of the forms of individuation and socialization that characterized bourgeois family life. Although their specific accounts of the role of the family varied, the Frankfurt School theorists were consistent in arguing that insofar as the family constituted a viable private domain of relationships outside the reach of the state, it performed a 'negative' function with respect to society. On the one hand it prepared individuals (men, by default) for the liberal duties of self-restraint and democratic participation, and on the other provided a haven from the purely instrumental values of the marketplace. For Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, the oedipal complex was the definitive account of this process.[8] They agreed, too, that monopoly capitalism posed a basic challenge to oedipalization insofar as bourgeois paternal authority rested on the father's status as an independent economic agent—the fully empowered individual of liberal civil society. As monopoly capitalism reduced the father to an increasingly impotent economic position, that authority crumbled, subjecting the family to increasing contradictions and greater determination by 'public power' (Marcuse, 1970: 15). These difficulties, in turn, had dire consequences for the socializing and individuating function of the family. In oedipal terms, the paternal function of interdiction—the key 'threat of castration' that crystallizes the development of the autonomous ego—loses its force. As a consequence, the internalization of authority—the oedipal outcome that reproduces the paternal role—fails to fully occur. In a society that lacks strong fathers, individual egos remain weak and in search of both a positive ideal and a sense of appropriate limits.

The Frankfurt theorists had no doubts about where the ego would find such an ideal: 'It is precisely the idealization of himself which the fascist leader tries to promote in his followers …' By playing the "great little man", a person who suggests both omnipotence and the idea that he is just one of the folks … [the] leader image gratifies the follower's twofold wish to submit to authority and to be the authority himself (Adorno, 1992: 91). Fromm was the first to specify this basic masochistic structure of the authoritarian personality. The empirical studies of the Institute, initially directed by Fromm in Germany and subsequently expanded in the United States, were expected to support this conclusion by gathering data on prejudices and attitudes toward authority among the working and middle classes. Among the latter group of studies, however, only *The Authoritarian Personality*, co-authored by Adorno, Else Frenkel Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford, drew strong correlations between authoritarianism and ostensibly relevant forms of submissiveness, aggressiveness, anti-semitism, and 'Exaggerated concern with sexual "goingson"' (Adorno et al., 1950: 228). Indeed, *The Authoritarian Personality* went so far as to offer a statistical model of authoritarian tendencies.[9]

The other dimension of psychoanalysis that proved central to the Frankfurt critical theorists was Freud's association of civilization with the repression of pleasure. The origins of this critique lay in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, which transformed the theological notion of a paradise lost—still visible in Rousseau's secularized version of the fall into civilization—into a psychological model of originary repression. It was Nietzsche, moreover, who identified the greater stakes of this fall, to which Freud would return in late works such as *Civilization and Its Discontents*. These were not only the repression of spontaneous, unsanctioned desires—the super-ego internalization of the particular social order—but the role of societal force, once of the most brutal kind, in the creation of the internalized, divided and developed psyche. As Nietzsche argued:

> it needs only a glance at our ancient penal codes to impress on us what labor it takes to create a nation of thinkers … By such methods the individual was finally taught to remember five or six 'I won'ts' which entitled him to participate in the benefits of society; and indeed, with the aid of this sort of memory, people eventually 'came to their senses'. What an enormous price man had to pay for reason, seriousness, control over his emotions—those grand human prerogatives and cultural showpieces! How much blood and horror lies behind all 'good things'! (1956: 193–4)

If, for the Frankfurt theorists, Nietzsche was guilty of defending 'irrationalism' in his attack on the psychological foundations of civilization, Freud's account of this fundamental repression proved, to the contrary, enormously suggestive. If civilization for Freud offered much the same bargain, demanding the deferral, narrowing, or prohibition of pleasure, this process none the less called into play a more complex adjustment of primal forces than Nietzsche allowed—an accommodation of life and death instincts, Eros and Thanatos.

Among the core Frankfurt theorists, Marcuse was perhaps the least interested in psychoanalytic considerations during the 1930s, preferring to explore the terrain of Hegelian and Marxist dialectics. His postwar work, however, evidences a dramatic re-evaluation of Freud's significance—particularly for revolutionary theory. It explores at length and on diverse occasions the social dynamics of pleasure and repression, and goes furthest in expanding on Freud's relatively limited historicization of this process. In so doing, Marcuse takes up the Freudian account of primordial, presocial instinctual life. Where eros had originally been a generalized and undifferentiated principle of sexual pleasure—a ‘polymorphously-perverse’ extension of libidinal energy—the constitution of society around ‘unpleasant’ labor increasingly limited eros to the narrow construction of genital, and ultimately familial sexuality. Where the death instinct had been simply subordinated to the life instinct in living creatures, the demands of civilization pressed it into other sublimations ‘toward the outside world in the form of socially useful aggression—toward nature and sanctioned enemies—or, in the form of conscience, or morality, … by the superego for the socially useful mastery of one's own drives’ (1970: 8). Here lies the crucial transition between the theory of repression and the critique of reason that marks Marcuse's work of the period. The death instinct, for Marcuse, becomes identified not only with the internalization of authority, but with instrumental reason directed at the world. Horkheimer, addressing the other side of this equation, made the homology explicit: ‘objective reason … is accessible to him who takes upon himself the effort of dialectical thinking, or identically, who is capable of eros’ (1992a: 38).[10]

Within this framework, the Frankfurt theorists ultimately diverged over whether the conflict between eros and the death instinct was resolvable. Once again, this disagreement found Horkheimer and Adorno in a position of growing pessimism—increasingly aligned with Freud's late conclusion that humanity tended toward self-destruction. Marcuse, on the other hand, continued to envision the liberation of human energies, hoping to ‘emancipate’ eros from the excessive and intensifying sublimation of the labor process. This was the task he set himself in *Eros and Civilization* and other writing of the post-war period. When the ‘libidinal revolution’ arrived after a fashion in the 1960s, Marcuse was one of its heroes.

The Culture Industry

The culture industry, Horheimer and Adorno claimed in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, provides a ‘palliative’ for this repression, offering entertainment as a substitute for genuine pleasure. Culture becomes an industry not merely because it is organized along lines of mass production and distribution—of films and consumer goods, for example—but also because those products extend the logic of the labor process, controlling the forms of available diversion and integrating them into the cycle of production and consumption. Where leisure time once represented the limit of economically structured activity, it now becomes another mechanism of control and source of profit. In the process, a new unity is achieved:

> by occupying men's senses from the time they leave the factory in the evening to the time they clock in again the next morning with matter that bears the impress of the labor process they themselves have to sustain throughout the day, this subsumption mockingly satisfies the concept of a unified culture which the philosophers of personality contrasted with mass culture. (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1987: 131)

The turn from active forms of cultural participation to passive forms of cultural consumption is another dimension of this process. Older conceptions of culture 'still expected a contribution from the individual', positing the autonomous self's engagement with an externalized object or experience. The logic of technological innovation reduces this space of action. To an evergrowing extent, culture-producers are separated from culture-consumers. For Horkheimer and Adorno, 'The step from the telephone to the radio has clearly distinguished the roles. The former still allowed the subscriber to play the role of subject, and was liberal. The latter is democratic; it turns all participants into listeners and authoritatively subjects them to broadcast programs which are all exactly the same. No machinery of rejoinder has been devised …' (1987: 124, 122).[11]

Though Horkheimer and Adorno had developed core elements of their critique of the culture industry while still in Europe, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* also reflects the extremis of a second exile—this time to Southern California, where Horkheimer spent several years in the early 1940s in order to improve his health. Hollywood, home to a large community of German exiles during the war, was the catalyst for this highly provocative, influential, problematic and ultimately deeply pessimistic account of the development of instrumental reason since the classical age. What began with Odysseus' cunning culminated in the emergence of the benign totalitarianism of American culture, which integrated all of the control of the totalitarian regimes without anything approaching the brutality. The joining of economic and cultural production, Horkheimer and Adorno asserted, had achieved a purely 'affirmative' culture in which real negation was a fiction and in which bourgeois autonomy was effectively abolished. The combination of technological and administrative power successfully overwhelms the weakened modern personality, which in the end comes to prefer its submission. In this context culture no longer provides an occasion for autonomous individual response but pre-emptively constructs the available choices, including those defined as oppositional. Such a world of prefabricated choice no longer requires coercion. Indeed as Marcuse noted it perversely realizes the bourgeois ambition of Kantian freedom – the final rationalization that establishes harmony between individual will and the social order. As Marcuse glossed this issue, ‘All freedoms are predetermined and preformed by [society] and subordinated not so much to political force as to the rational demands of the apparatus’ (1970: 16).

As the bourgeois subject weakens, the culture industry becomes the main purveyor of the *content* of personality: ‘It is as though the free space which the individual has at his disposal for his psychic processes has been greatly narrowed down; it is no longer possible for something like an individual psyche with its own demands and decisions to develop; the space is occupied by public, social forces’ (1970: 14). Hollywood, rather than the father, or for that matter the Fiihrer, now provides the principal ego ideals – the heroes and heroines of popular narratives – as well as the appropriate cues for social behavior. Together with the disciplinary forces of the workplace, school and other institutions, Horkheimer and Adorno suggest, ‘the individual is reduced to the nodal point of the conventional responses and modes of operation expected of him …’ (1987: 28).

The patina of individuality survives, however, in the extreme segmentation of the mass public – indeed this reformulation of individuality is necessary to the system's efficiency and promise of freedom. No longer the province of family life and economic autonomy, individuality becomes a product, a matter of positioning among minutely differentiated consumer choices. As Horkheimer and Adorno describe the process, ‘Something is provided for all so that none may escape; the distinctions are emphasized and extended … Everybody must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previously determined and indexed level, and choose the category of mass product turned out for his type’ (1987: 123). Such choices, as popular critiques of communist societies once made explicit, bear an increasingly large share of the meaning of freedom.

The totalization of this system lies not in the fact that it remains hidden, but in the fact that it no longer needs to hide: ‘The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use products even though they see through them’ (1987: 167). By the same token, ideology critique becomes an empty exercise, since the system is no longer perpetuated by mystification or false-consciousness. Worst of all, Horkheimer and Adorno see little evidence that the hollowing-out of individuality constitutes in any way a fatal or even intensifying contradiction:

> the popularity of the hero models comes partly from a secret satisfaction that the effort to achieve individuation has at last been replaced by the effort to imitate, which is admittedly more breathless.

> It is idle to hope that this self-contradictory disintegrating ‘person’ will not last for generations, that the system must collapse because of such a psychological split, or that the deceitful substitution of the stereotype for the individual will of itself become unbearable for mankind. Since Shakespeare's Hamlet, the unity of the personality has been seen through asa pretense… For centuries society has been preparing for Victor Mature and Mickey Rooney. By destroying, they come to fulfill. (1987: 156)

Still, even in this bleakest work, Horkheimer and Adorno resist granting the culture industry complete victory—if only because to do so would evacuate the rationale for their own critical reflections. Thus, even as witnesses to the reduction of social negativity to zero and of the resulting creation of a ‘one-dimensional society’ (as Marcuse would later describe it), they find hints of negativity in the most apparently trivial or compromised acts—the lack of attention commonly paid to movies, for instance, or the energy expended in the jitterbug. The nature of this instability became one of Adorno's chief preocuppations in the 1950s and 1960s, leading to his rejection of the totalizing capacity of thought in *Negative Dialectics*. It would be left, however, to the cultural studies movement of the 1960s and 1970s to explore and politically exploit this space of less than perfect transmission between cultural producers and consumers.[12] For Adorno, such practical possibilities remained insignificant. The dynamism of thought merely pointed to the ‘theoretical’ openness of the future.

The main refuge of negativity for Adorno was art. This reflected the importance that he and the other major figures accorded the imagination and ‘fantasy’ in negating the status quo—in imagining the truly different. If ‘the universal criterion of merit’ for objects of mass culture was ‘the amount of “conspicuous production”, of blatant cash investment’, great art, by contrast, contained ‘a negative truth’—‘a force of protest of the humane against the pressure of domineering institutions, religious and otherwise …’ More generally, great art transcended banal period styles, pointing beyond the limits of the present (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1987: 124, 130). Modern art, Adorno argued, condenses these tendencies further, resulting in works whose formal difficulty sharply contrasts with the frictionless entertainments of the culture industry. Like many of the modernists themselves, Adorno equated difficulty with resistance to commodification. As a symbol of the negation of the present, art maintained the *‘promesse de bonheur’*—the Utopian promise of happiness – which stood against the rationalized present (Adorno, 1970: 430).[13] Adorno's celebration of the atonal musical compositions of Arthur Schönberg and his repeated, categorical attacks on jazz as a commodified musical form are the purest expressions of this position. They are also perhaps the clearest indicators of its limitations, making visible Adorno's retreat from the effort to find or imagine negativity among existing social actors, and demonstrating the tenuousness of the distinction between subjective taste and objective reason.[14]

Habermas

Without question, the most significant inheritor and interpreter of this tradition is Jiirgen Habermas, a sometime protégé of Adorno and the leading figure of the second generation of Frankfurt School scholars. Much of this inheritance is reflected in Habermas' rebellion against the pessimism of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* which, to an unfortunate degree, set the terms and the tone for most of Horkheimer's and Adorno's work in the post-war period. For both, critical theory became an increasingly rearguard action dedicated to preserving critique for an all-too-vaguely identified future—a ‘message in a bottle’ thrown to future readers. We have seen, too, the ways in which Marcuse continued to seek an exit from many of the same structural conclusions about modern society. His project of libidinal revolution and diagnoses of the false satisfactions of consumer society in *Eros and Civilization* and *One-Dimensional Man* made Marcuse a key figure for many 1960s radicals – though Marcuse himself was never convinced of the viability of student-led revolution. In many ways, Habermas was temperamentally closer to Marcuse. One of Habermas' major contributions was to recover something of the forwardlooking, constructive dimension to critical theory that had been characteristic of the early Frankfurt School.

Habermas' contributions to critical theory are many. He has endeavored to place critical theory on solid epistemological ground, maintaining a dialectical relationship between ‘objectivist’ analysis of social systems and subjectivist or hermeneutic analysis of action.[15] Among his key arguments is the notion that technical and practical interests are not simply sources of distortion to knowledge that must be eliminated for a perfect, objective orientation to the truth to appear. On the contrary, knowledge is formed only on the basis of interests; these shape the ways in which it appears and it would be inaccessible without some such orientation. What is crucial is not the elimination of interest, but analysis of the knowledge-forming interests at work in any specific context (Habermas, 1971). Most basically, Habermas has refocused the critical analysis of modernity and its contradictions on an enquiry into the unfinished project and liberatory potential of modernity. This is the basis for some of Habermas' barbed exchanges with post-structuralist thinkers who have retained something of the older Frankfurt theorists' pessimism about emancipatory projects, often rejecting the very historical narratives that give them meaning as reflecting the effects of power over knowledge.

Habermas has focused on re-establishing emancipatory human reason as the principal stake of critical and political reflection. This is clearly an attempt to escape the blind alley in which Horkheimer and Adorno found themselves after the war. Equally, though, it involves a rejection of Marcuse's utopianism, which relegated hope for a rational society to an improbable radical transformation of human subjectivity. Instead, Habermas has attempted to isolate the necessary conditions of critical reason by means of an immanent critique of the actual historical institutions in which critical reason achieved political significance. In so doing, he has explored the possibility of reproducing or at least leveraging those values against the mechanisms of fabricated consent in modern democratic societies.

Habermas' early theory proceeded largely by a historically concrete analysis of the institutions and theoretical principles of the public sphere. These suggested that there was in fact an unrealized liberatory potential in the bourgeois project of democracy—and Habermas has argued resolutely against leftists who see democracy as only a sham covering up for the interests of capitalist elites. For Habermas, one of the historic but tragically ephemeral achievements of bourgeois society was the emergence of a public sphere organized around the principle of rational-critical discourse—a public sphere which could ‘compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion’ (Habermas, 1989: 25). New semi-public spaces and forms of sociability in the eighteenth century contributed to this development, from the coffeehouse to the newspaper and literary salon. So did the growth of civil society—the realm of social self-regulation which included but was not limited to the market, and within which the public sphere was located. The roughly simultaneous construction of family life as an intimate, private sphere both helped to define the borders of the public sphere and to support the ostensibly autonomous individuals who entered into it. Here Habermas noted the vast importance of the eighteenth-century sentimental novel in disseminating the models of intimacy and the vocabulary of interiority that came to define the private. Together, these developments provided a context for the exchange and evaluation of opinions in a space that lay between the private realm and the state, beginning in some cases with discussion of novels or local business, but increasingly inclusive of public matters. In this process, public opinion gradually acquired legitimacy as a reasoned form of access to truth.

The legitimacy of the public sphere in liberal thought depended on two factors. First, individuals must be autonomous; this was guaranteed initially but problematically by private property, which allowed the emergence of a class of men whose livelihoods did not depend on political power or patronage. Secondly, the discourse of the public sphere gained legitimacy from its ‘rational-critical’ character in which the best argument and not the highest ranking person was authoritative. This depended on a ‘bracketing’ or putting aside of differences of rank and background for the purposes of argument within the public sphere.

As Habermas recognized, access to the early public sphere was sharply restricted—typically to propertied men, although there was considerable diversity within this group. None the less, he argues that the rational-critical public sphere represented bourgeois universalism at its most progressive, if not democratic. Like earlier critical theorists, Habermas suggests that rational-critical discourse in the Enlightenment was oriented toward the concept of objective reason—the revealing of the rational laws which governed society—and to a form of social negativity which brought reason to bear against the traditional and still dominant authority of church and state. Also like earlier critical theorists, Habermas is highly critical of subsequent developments. In his account, the eighteenth-century era of rational-critical discourse slowly succumbs to the processes of rationalization which it itself had set into motion. These included the pressures of democratization, which achieved mass inclusion at the expense of the structures of economic and psychological autonomy that had, in principle, underwritten rational-critical discourse. They included, too, the expedient replacement of the goal of objective reason by the utilitarian process of balancing private interests characteristic of modern constitutionalism. Finally, they involved the breakdown of the constitutive distinction between state and society as the state became responsible for administering and correcting for increasingly large-scale organizations of capital. As far as public discourse is concerned, this situation results, Habermas argues, in a culture industrylike subsumption of the process of opinion formation, whereby ‘rational-critical debate had a tendency to be replaced by consumption, and the web of public communication unraveled into acts of individuated reception, however uniform in mode’ (1989: 161).

Whatever the potential of democracy, therefore, Habermas still confronted the challenge posed by Horkheimer and Adorno in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The culture industry and the massification of society seemed to stand in the way of democratic progress through the public sphere. To meet this challenge, Habermas sought bases for Utopian hope that lay deeper than historically specific social institutions. He drew sustenance for a time from Lawrence Kohlberg's psychological theories which suggested a natural development of capacities for ever more universalistic reasoning about justice.[16] His more enduring resolution to the theoretical dilemma, however, drew on theories of language. In the very ways in which human beings use language, Habermas saw commitments to intersubjective validity that provided a universal basis for progressive development of reason. Because such resources were implicit in the very capacity for speech, they would always be available as a basis for attempting to ground social life on something other than money and power—no matter what temporary setbacks the causes of liberation and solidarity might suffer in the meantime.

The universal grounding for critical theory and democratic hopes that Habermas found in language use is a counterweight to his insistence that theorists recognize that the systemic integration of modern society cannot simply be undone. The lives of billions of people depend on the market and state structures that have been created, and these are not simply one-sided instruments of elite power. They reflect also compromises that ordinary people have won over the years—from minimum wage laws to public health services. Following Weber, Habermas argues that it is necessary and inevitable that large and complex modern societies be differentiated into different value spheres organized according to different criteria. At a broad level of generality, we need to recognize that 'non-linguistic steering media' such as money and power organize much of our lives. We respond to them with instrumental and strategic action. But as critical theorists we need also to see the limits of such systems. In the first place, we need to see the human action that stands behind them and offers us the possibility of criticizing them.[17] More crucially, for Habermas, we need also to see that much of our lives remains organized in other ways. We have the capacity to resist the colonization of the everyday 'lifeworlds' we construct through communication with each other by the systemic imperatives and strategic action of markets and states.

Habermas first approached the double questions of how to secure a 'good' (or at least stable) social system, and how to preserve communicatively organized social life from reduction to systemic imperatives in *Legitimation Crisis* and other writings of the 1970s. In these he carried forward the classical Frankfurt School concern for the rapprochement of society and state. Habermas emphasized two major characteristics of the late-capitalist system: 'an increase in state intervention in order to secure the system's stability, and a growing interdependence of research and technology, which has turned the sciences into the leading productive force' (Habermas, 1992: 130). The former creates a compact between workers and the state, which increasingly assumes responsibility for their welfare. This process, Habermas argues, 'depoliticizes' the population, reducing politics to matters of technical administration such as the maintenance of economic growth and the buying-off of the economy's structural victims. The latter feature—the systematic pursuit of technological progress and efficiency—becomes the official ideology of this state of affairs. Scientific innovation, rather than intensified exploitation (that is, harder work) is increasingly recognized as the only guarantor of continued growth; meanwhile, the social displacements that technological revolution inevitably provokes are themselves moderated by the state in a further exercise of rational administration.

In his magnum opus, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas integrates his analysis of the power of systemic integration through the non-linguistic media of power and money with his analysis of the potentials for both resistance and transcendence inherent in communication. Specifically, he distinguishes two basic registers of language use and human action: the instrumental, oriented to accomplishing objectives, relating means to ends, and the communicative, oriented to reaching understanding. (Strategic action is an ambiguous case, close to instrumental action, but involving the attempt to accomplish ends through interaction with other people, as in games.) On this basis, Habermas introduces a distinction between *system world* and *life-*

world.[18]

Although the larger field of instrumental action grows increasingly dominant and alienating, all speech is predicated on certain standards of validity that derive from the interpersonal realm of the lifeworld. Procedures for evaluating the truth of a statement, for instance, rely not only on the existence of a conceptual framework, but presuppose that speakers speak without manipulative intent. These aspects of communicative reason, Habermas argues, are marginalized by deeper and more extensive ‘colonization of the lifeworld’ by the system world—for example, the growing role of the state in family life. This intrusion, he argues further, produces many of the individual symptoms of alienation and disorientation in the face of modernity, as well as forms of social protest in defense of the lifeworld. Potentially, the latter provide the materials for a rational discussion of limits to the system world, though such coordination is rarely achieved. The key point, with regard to systemic incursions, is that the communicative basis of the lifeworld can not thereby be lost.

Habermas supports both an active rehabilitation of this underlying consensual structure of human communication and a loosely evolutionary schema that implies that communicative reason develops alongside its instrumental counterpart. The goal of both accounts is the recovery of genuine political discourse, understood as a process of unimpeded consensus formation, of ‘communicatively achieved understanding’. Such consensus would be able to grapple with the social questions of large-scale organization without the distorting influences of abstract ‘steering mechanisms' such as science and money. Directed by communicative rationality, social and cultural change could (and perhaps in evolutionary fashion would) multiply the occasions for actively informed consensus and in the process expand the field of the socially possible beyond existing ideological constraints.

Where earlier critical theory had effectively displaced the possibility of a privileged social actor (such as a class) beyond the historical horizon, Habermas reinscribes that opposition into a split between existing areas of social activity. Communicative action—action oriented to reflective understanding and the creation of social relations—provides a resource against instrumental action, which is embodied in the integrated economic, state and cultural networks of the system world.

Communicative action has been the central subject of Habermas' work of the past twenty years, informing his wide-ranging discussions of ethics, law, capitalism and the philosophical tradition. Indeed, in his analysis of modern legal systems, he has sought to integrate his early analysis of the public sphere with his later theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1996). Central to this is the attempt to reformulate both ethics and politics in terms of a thoroughgoing proceduralism—an attempt to keep distinct the concrete questions of what constitutes a good life and the more general (possibly universal) procedural questions of how agreements should be reached. This effort extended, indeed in a sense radicalized, the early Frankfurt School emphasis on theory that was at once historically embedded and necessarily open-ended. He harkens back to Kant, suggesting that the continual critique of the categories of knowledge is a necessary response to modernity, with its imperfectly predictable patterns of change: ‘Modernity, now aware of its contingencies, depends all the more on a procedural reason, that is, on a reason that puts itself on trial’ (1996: xli).

Habermas' linguistic turn has been greeted with skepticism by many critical theorists and fellow travelers, as much for the strict separation it seems to imply between lifeworld and system world as for its explicit idealization of speech and consensus. On the one hand, Habermas assumes that the lifeworld and its central institution, the family, are not also constituted by a specific organization of capitalism, and by extension not also subject to forms of power and oppression—in this case directed primarily against women. Any attempt to defend the family as the source of consensual and interpersonal reason must make some account of these traditional forms of domination—all the more so since they frequently involve the denial of equal terms in decision-making. In such a context, as Nancy Fraser (1992) has noted, it is not surprising that the system world can come to seem a liberating means of depersonalizing relations.

A more general problem with this division is that it reproduces the classical assumption that identities are somehow ‘settled' prior to entry into the process of consensus formation. This allows Habermas to further assume that the entrants into public discussion will share the same ‘generalizable interests’—that there is, in short, a single authoritative discourse about public affairs which can be separated out from the distortions of power and distinctions among groups. But such a claim is problematic for any number of reasons. For one, it assumes as settled in advance the question of what constitutes a political versus a private issue—a subject of contention in virtually every social movement since the eighteenth century, and which is inextricably part of the democratic process itself. It tends to assume also that identity is a static, unified object, neither internally divided nor shaped by participation in arenas outside the private realm, such as system world organizations or public processes of deliberation themselves. Here Habermas reverses earlier critical theory regarding the constitution of the subject by power relations—the notion of the individual as a ‘nodal point’ within a field of overlapping systems—and retreats from psychoanalytic insights into the complex, divided nature of identity and the experience of self.

Not least of all, questions arise about the extent to which Habermas' theory draws on liberal assumptions about the relationship of state to individuals. Habermas himself has argued that these assumptions are outmoded: ‘The practical philosophy of modernity continued to assume that individuals belong to a society like members to a collectivity or parts to a whole—even if the whole is only supposed to constitute itself through the connection of its parts. However, modern societies have since become so complex that these two conceptual motifs—that of a society concentrated in the state and that of a society made up of individuals—can no longer be applied unproblematically’ (1996: 1–2). Habermas suggests that the problematic assumptions about individuals and their autonomy derived from the philosophies of consciousness dominant throughout most of modernity and that his communicative theory avoids them by grasping persons as intersubjectively constituted. Likewise, he has argued that discourse theory provides an effective way to address concerns about what constitutes the relevant totality. This is important precisely because the state cannot be assumed in the traditional manner (for example, as Europe integrates). The growth of transnational politics (and transnational moral concerns like human rights) is precisely the kind of historical change that challenges the adequacy of existing theories. Many such theories can be shown to depend, for example, on the category of the nation-state and liberal assumptions about how it relates to citizens. Habermas' critical theory is an innovation designed in part to address these concerns.

Not everyone is satisfied, of course. Of particular importance are two linked sets of questions. First, does Habermas' theory do justice to cultural, gender and other differences among human beings?[19] Secondly, does it presume a unified progressive notion of society that derives from the modern history of nationalism and state-making and is not sufficiently critical of it. The issues are linked, for example, by questions about how differences among citizens are given or denied legitimacy in the public sphere or by the constitutional arrangements of states. Habermas has addressed both issues, and indeed their interrelationship.[20] As we noted above, his reconstruction of liberalism (and of Kantian philosophy) emphasizes the separation of questions about the concrete content of the good life from questions about the potentially universalizable procedures by which justice is achieved. States should be ordered by the latter, he suggests, as the best way of guaranteeing respect or at least tolerance for people who differ from each other. Ethnicity may, for example, be salient in giving people different conceptions of the good life, but it ought not to be salient in how the law resolves disputes between people. Likewise, membership in a modern polity should be based on adherence to its constitution and not on ethnicity. Far from presuming the existing history of nation-states, Habermas argues, this would be the best way to move beyond it towards a European constitutional democracy.

Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism

Among those least persuaded by Habermas are a diverse range of theorists often lumped together under the labels ‘post-structuralism’ and ‘postmodernism’. This is not the place to examine the relation between these terms or the different positions of these theorists. It is important to note, however, that post-structuralism and postmodernism both constitute alternative versions of critical theory in important respects, not only in terms of the broad approach to critique outlined above but also in the influence of early Frankfurt School theorists—especially Adorno—on their dominant articulations.

Like Habermas, post-structuralist and postmodernist theorists investigate the nature and margin of human freedom in an increasingly systematized world. Major post-structuralist and postmodernist figures such as Michel Foucault, François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard have tended to reproduce the Frankfurt School's darkest assessments of modernity, seeing human subjectivity, whether by history or nature, as fundamentally constituted and defined by increasingly coherent structures of power – even, and in some cases, especially, where the dominant ideology emphasizes autonomy and freedom. As modernity extends and refines the power of systems to ‘discipline’ and routinize human behavior, the margin of human unpredictability—the only remaining measure of freedom on these terms—narrows to insignificance. At the logical endpoint of such speculations are postmodernists such as Baudrillard, who, in announcing the completion of the Enlightenment's undermining of its own categories of truth and value, find ‘ironic detachment’ to be the only available posture.[21]

The more common conclusion, however, is that criticism and theory are best used to enhance this margin, breaking the grip—if in only occasional ways—of predictable action and habit. ‘It is important,’ Lyotard suggests in his account of modernity as a set of language games, ‘to increase displacement in the games, and even to disorient it, in such a way as to make an unexpected “move”’ (1984: 16). Concern with programmed circuits of behavior is, as we have suggested, highly visible in the critical theory of Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and, especially, Habermas, but it also has a long and relatively independent history in French social thought and philosophy from Bergson on. Indeed, breaking such circuits constitutes a virtual leitmotiv of the postwar generation of French structuralist and post-structuralist theorists, from Roland Barthes (1973) (in his attack on *myth)* to Foucault (in the notion of *resistance)* (1980)[22] and Gilles Deleuze (1990) (in the exploration of *sense)*. Though their sources differ widely, this broad front against systematized thought suggests a common need to situate critique at a level below large-scale organization, which inevitably creates its own clichés and demands for conformity.

At the limit, this level is found in cognitive or bodily practices—in forms of micropolitics which take thought and the self as the first and, in some cases, only available battleground. It is here that many contemporary social theorists run the risk of reducing opposition to a ubiquitous, undifferentiated phenomenon, which provides no help in evaluating political and social alternatives. This charge has been leveled in different ways against Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, who, however great their differences, expressly part with a notion of reason which might ground liberatory projects. Indeed, if Foucault's concept of resistance and Derrida's *différance* have an analog in the work of the Frankfurt School, it is in Adorno's notion of negative dialectics, which similarly asserts the inevitable dynamism of thought, and the consequent incompleteness of identity claims, concepts and categories, and mechanisms of social control.

Pierre Bourdieu also rejects the idea of a static social system but does focus on the ways in which social reproduction takes place and how it is accomplished through social action. His sociology has been perhaps uniquely successful in integrating theoretical development and empirical analysis. Indeed, Bourdieu has condemned the ‘theoretical theory’ of the Frankfurt School. Eschewing conceptual abstractions, his work is a minute exploration of forms of embodied behavior, the margins of improvisation in which individuals act, and the subtle shadings of structured and autonomous response. *Habitus* is his term for the regulated form of improvisation that characterizes daily life—the set of ‘durable dispositions’ which condenses tradition, knowledge and practices, and which guides choices without ever being strictly reducible to formal rules.[23] Bourdieu has organized his analyses of diverse fields of knowledge and social activity around the question of practices in order to reconstruct theory from the ground up, reaching conclusions about regularities and social structures on the basis of empirical research. For Bourdieu, this is the advantage of sociology over philosophy, but it is not a sufficient advantage. Echoing a by now familiar theme in this chapter, empirical work must be complemented by careful consideration of the role of the sociologist and the place of sociological knowledge in society, which like all forms of knowledge, Bourdieu argues, is produced by interested parties.[24] Only by making objectivity itself an object of analysis is it possible to avoid the ‘theoretical distortion’ associated with objectivity claims—the birds-eye view which reduces ‘all social relations … to decoding operations’ (1977: 1). Such an immanent critique of the role of the sociologist, Bourdieu argues, is not a threat to the truth of social science. On the contrary it makes social science more scientific, capable of accounting, finally, for its constitutive blind spot. The self-referentiality of this gesture completes the ‘autonomization’ of the social scientific field, much as the doctrine of ‘art for art's sake’ completes the autonomization of the artistic field.[25] Though in most respects they are hardly fellow-travelers, Bourdieu's analysis of the way in which interest may be mobilized to pursue truth through science is strikingly reminiscent of Habermas' analysis of knowledge-forming interests.

In *The Weight of the World* (1999b) and other recent work Bourdieu has relied on the legitimacy conferred by a reflexive analysis of knowledge production and a critical theory of struggles over categories of thought and action to draw attention to rhetorics that legitimate forms of injustice and inequality. None the less, it is difficult to see how his account of the *habitus* permits individual behavior to escape the essentially conservative limits of improvisation, or more generally how social transformation change occurs at all—except, as in his example of Kabyle society, through intervention from the outside. His analyses of social reproduction run the risk of treating society as an efficiently closed system. Struggle for money, prestige, legitimation and other forms of capital occurs, Bourdieu argues, at all levels of society and across a wide range of differently organized fields. But such contention appears as a universal social feature only nominally tied to developing historical or economic contradictions. Thus, if the utility of Bourdieu's sociology lies in its capacity to demystify social relations—claims often made for Foucault's and Derrida's methods as well—it begs the question, close to the heart of critical theory, of for whom? For what social actor and to what purpose? Bourdieu's leftist political sympathies, like Foucault's, provide an implicit answer: some groups are more dominated than others. While Bourdieu gives a compelling account of what empowers him as an actor in such political struggles, however, his theory does not in itself provide a rationale for or orientation to such activity. It is the basis for an extraordinarily productive empirical sociology, and it is clearly in many respects a critical theory, but if it is a theory with practical intent, the link between theory and practice remains underdeveloped.[26]

Michel Foucault's work furnishes one of the pre-eminent engagements with these issues in recent years. A enormously influential historian and analyst of modernity, Foucault's early work is very much a historicization of reason. His study, *The Order of Things* (1970), describes an epochal shift in the definition of the human (and a diremption in the idea of a unified nature) that occurred in the course of the eighteenth century. As Foucault demonstrated, classical thought was based on the idea of representation as an objective feature of the universe. Resemblances and recurrences among things provided the basis for knowledge, and could link an infinite range of similar phenomena (as the coincidence of dates informs connections in astrology). The modern *episteme* broke with this order of representation by introducing the idea of the finite human subject as basis for all knowledge, thereby also discovering ‘man’ as a separate object of enquiry. In the context of this shift, language became newly problematic. The relationship between word and thing was no longer transparent. So too the relationship between the human being as subject—maker of history—and object, alienated man, subject to powers greater than himself. Foucault refused the temptation to naturalize the modern perspective, to treat it as a superior reality which surpassed earlier forms of knowledge. Rather, he tried to study the historical change itself, especially as it issued in different kinds of projects of knowledge (sciences) which themselves had limits. Echoing the Frankfurt School, he stressed the historicity of the categories of knowledge. Foucault also echoed the Frankfurt theorists (and both followed Nietzsche) in seeing a central feature of the modern *episteme* as an orientation toward truths which enabled technical mastery over nature. But this logic eventually encounters its own limits. As for Horkheimer and Adorno, artistic modernism (for Foucault that of Antonin Artaud and Raymond Roussel) marks the symbolic end of this paradigm. Treating the sign as a material object rather than a marker of objectified and instrumentalized reality—as a range of modernist writers did—breaks the sign-object structure of truth and identity. These artistic tendencies, Foucault argued, tracked closely with a larger socioeconomic, political, scientific and metaphysical retreat from the claims of truth. Foucault then envisioned, somewhat loosely, another paradigm transition—'Since man was constituted at a time when language was doomed to dispersion, will he not be dispersed when language recovers its unity?' Will he not disappear 'like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea?' (1970: 386, 387). We are left to ponder our own status as subjects transformed—or crucially, awaiting transformation—by a new relationship to knowledge.

Foucault's later work loses this potentially emancipatory teleology, moving toward the much starker account of power, technology and the cooption of opposition visible in *Discipline and Punish* ([1975] 1979). Here the gentle totalitarianism of liberal society is every bit as efficient as in the postwar work of Horkheimer and Adorno—indeed Foucault acknowledged regret at having encountered the Frankfurt School only late in the course of his own thinking on these issues (Wiggershaus, 1994: 4). His final investigations of sexuality, however, tread a discernible middle path on this point, envisioning society as characterized at all times by a constantly changing dynamic of power and resistance. In this respect, Foucault implied, ancient Greece differed little from eighteenth-century France or twenty-first-century America.

One general implication of this emphasis on the constitutive effects of power is that there can be no strict distinction between instrumental and communicative reason—though Foucault did, at times, recognize the possibility of making *relative* distinctions on these grounds (1992: 311).[27] For a critical theorist such as Habermas, this presents a fundamental dilemma: without a critical ground on which to base emancipatory human action there are no criteria for distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate power. The question of a qualitatively better future is either rejected or expelled beyond the historical horizon. Foucault shared this problem, in Habermas' view, with Horkheimer and Adorno.[28] Part of the difficulty, for Habermas, lies in approaches to modernity that imagine truth and value as a unified realm in which theories about the self, political economy, science and metaphysics depend upon the same forms of legitimation, and consequently suffer a collective disintegration in the passage to something like postmodernity.

This is in essence the crisis of truth and value postulated by Nietzsche, whose account of modernity has exercised a tremendous influence on French twentieth-century thought. Habermas' distinction between instrumental and communicative reason, however idealized, challenges this account by recognizing different modes of legitimation in different areas of human experience. The project of an absolutely unified knowledge is no longer tenable. There are instead different ways of establishing functional truths. If, for instance, uncertainty in particle physics proves relatively inconsequential to how persons construct reliable fabrics of human relations at a given time, then we may well have more resources and fewer epochal contradictions to rely on in imagining social change—and achieving social solidarity. As Habermas argued with respect to Derrida and Rorty, 'They are still battling against the "strong" concepts of theory, truth, and system that have actually belonged to the past for over a century and a half…' (Habermas, 1987b: 408). Critical theory is not the pursuit of a grand system of knowledge, perfected and closed to new influences. It is, rather, an approach to improving on existing understanding—theoretical and practical. It offers 'epistemic gain', not absolute truth. It offers it in an open-ended fashion, in the recognition that all existing theories will need to be revised—perhaps radically or perhaps rejected—in the light of new historical experience.

Notes

1 There are a number of good general accounts of the Frankfurt School, including Martin Jay's *The Dialectical Imagination* (1973), David Held's *Introduction CRITICAL THEORYto Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (1980) and Rolf Wiggershaus' *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance* (1994).

2 The Frankfurt theorists were influenced in this regard by Georg Lukács' analysis of reification in *History and Class Consciousness* (1922). A generation older than the Frankfurt theorists, Lukács similarly combined influences from idealist philosophy, Marx and Weber into a critical theory of society, and also focused largely on cultural analysis. The idea of reification has older roots as well, and is similar to Marx's analysis of the 'fetishism of commodities' (in *Capital*, vol. 1, ch. 1). Marx's term was an analogy to the way in which some religions treat physical objects as sacred in themselves, obscuring the extent to which they have gained this

standing from social action and their capacity to serve as signs. The critique of reification is especially important in regard to capitalism, with its creation of labor markets and use of quantification to make labor itself appear as a 'thing' being exchanged rather than human action. See the analysis by the 'third generation' Frankfurt School theorist Moishe Postone in *Time, Labor and Social Domination* (1993).

3 It is common in social science to focus on explanation primarily as a matter of establishing relations of cause and effect (or at least more or less robust implication, cf. Boudon, 1974). Equally important, however, is the question of how adequate theoretical categories are to the phenomena they purport to describe. Much of the most important theoretical work necessarily involves figuring out the implications of the analytic categories or concepts employed—about which there are always choices.

4 This may involve claiming the standpoint of a social group, as Marx and Lukács claimed the standpoint of the proletariat and modern feminists have sometimes claimed the standpoint of women (or, less helpfully and pluralistically, of woman). But the idea of analysing the standpoint from which one works need not be a matter simply of identification with a group. It may involve analysing the way in which academic institutions affect the production of knowledge by professors, or the nature of one's own commitment to science or to society and how that shapes one's work. Most social theory is written implicitly from the standpoint of highly educated citizens in the world's richest societies. This no doubt shapes both theorists' choice of issues and the ways in which they approach those issues. The point is not to escape from this—which is quite impossible—but to achieve critical self-awareness and seek throughout one's work to examine the effects of one's perspective. See Calhoun, 1995: ch. 6.

5 These dimensions of Marx's thought were developed primarily in unpublished early works such as *The German Ideology* and *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844. These works were only rediscovered in the 1920s and only widely disseminated in the 1930s. Lukács did not have access to them when he wrote *History and Class Consciousness* in 1922.

6 Or to see the ongoing search for a privileged historical actor as an attempt to refound it. In this vein Frankfurt School analyses explored the negative potential of the Jews, the 'wretched' of the Third World, and the student radicals of the 1960s.

7 Much of this argument is synthesized in Pollack's classic essay 'State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations' (1941).

8 Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse were all relatively orthodox in matters of Freudian psychoanalytical the-

ory. The Institute did include other voices during the 1930s, though, especially Erich Fromm (whose ‘revisionist’, more social-constructionist approach to psychoanalysis Horkheimer and Adorno rejected). There was a wave of interest in sociocultural applications of psychoanalysis in the years before and after the Second World War. The Frankfurt theorists were influential, but always tended toward the defense of Freud against revisionists.

9 The other major works in the *Studies of Prejudice* dealt with a range of topics, but strongly confirmed the Institute's preoccupation with the link between anti-semitism and authoritarianism. These were *Dynamics of Prejudice: A Psychological and Sociological Study of Veterans*, by Bruno Bettleheim and Morris Janowitz; *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation*, by Nathan W. Ackerman and Marie Jahoda; *Prophets of Deceit*, by Leo Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman; and *Rehearsal for Destruction*, by Paul Massing.

10 It is worth noting that the passage from Nietzsche cited above similarly illuminates this crucial intersection between the theory of repression and the critique of reason—although Nietzsche's blanket dismissal of reason earned him the charge of ‘irrationalism’. For Nietzsche, the repression of pleasure is not merely the road to the internalization of authority; it also plays a fundamental role in the creation of human capacities—above all the duration of memory which makes man a social creature capable of making promises, and the development of reason, which displaces force as the arbiter of right.

11 It should be noted that the older forms of culture in which Horkheimer and Adorno see more participatory engagement were very limited in access, reaching mainly an educated and prosperous elite. The rise of the culture industry reflects the mass market that new recording and transmission technologies can reach. An unsolved puzzle (which resurfaces in Habermas' account of the structural transformations of the public sphere) is whether it is possible to have wider democratic access to cultural processes without losing interactivity, educated judgement, or other valued qualitative features.

12 Resulting in much closer attention to the dynamics of interpretation than the Frankfurt School thought necessary. Stuart Hall's model of encoding and decoding is one such model; reader-response theory in the United States and reception theory in Germany provide numerous others. Horkheimer and Adorno remained somewhat divided on this issue. If they sometimes implied that such space existed, they unequivocally denied that it mattered.

13 Marcuse, too, endorsed the Utopian potential of art when he returned to the subject in his final work, *The*

Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics (1978).

14 Much of Adorno's work on art, negative dialectics, and the question of style (which plays a prominent part in his writing) shows the influence of Walter Benjamin, a peripheral member of the Frankfurt School who died while fleeing France in 1940. Benjamin stressed a more archaic, communal dimension to the artistic gesture—an ‘aura’ of authenticity that surrounded the singular artwork or performance. ‘Mechanical reproduction’, Benjamin argued, destroys this connection between culture and authenticity. With the loss of this ancient function, art, like the economy and the family, ‘begins to be based on another practice—politics’ (1969: 224). It's worth noting that, unlike the other Frankfurt School figures, Benjamin saw the potential, at least, for new forms of radicalism in this politicization.

15 Among other things, Habermas thus relates critical theory to two of the most prominent alternatives in contemporary intellectual life (especially in Germany): Luhmann's systems theory and Gadamer's hermeneutics. Though he incorporates features of both, he has been more resolute in keeping his distance from hermeneutics. More importantly, perhaps, he insists on the inevitability in the social sciences of a ‘both/and’ relationship between the two extremes of objectivist and interpretative analysis: ‘Whereas the natural and the cultural or hermeneutic sciences are capable of living in a mutually indifferent, albeit more hostile than peaceful, coexistence, the social sciences must bear the tension of divergent approaches under one roof, for in them the very practice of research compels reflection on the relationship between analytic and hermeneutic research methodologies’ (Habermas, 1967: 3).

16 See, e.g., *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Habermas, 1979).

17 This can include offering a critique of the reification or fetishization involved in systems such as markets or states, revealing the human action that creates them. Habermas seems less interested in such a critique than earlier critical theorists, however, and in fact worried that those who undertake it will be led to imagine that the systems involved are less necessary than he thinks them to be. Others have argued that his theory would be improved by stressing this dimension more. See McCarthy, 1991 and Calhoun, 1988.

18 See *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (1979) and especially *Theory of Communicative Action*, vols. 1 and 2 (1984, 1987b).

19 Questions of identity loom very large for many of the ‘third generation’ Frankfurt School critical theorists. See for example Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self* (1992) and Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition* (1996). See also the debate occasioned by Charles Taylor's ‘The Politics of Recognition,’ including Habermas'

response, collected in Gutman, 1992.

20 See especially the essays collected in *The Inclusion of the Other* (1998); also Habermas, 1996: esp. ch. 7 and the two appendices.

21 See especially *The Mirror of Production* (Baudrillard, 1975) and *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (Baudrillard, 1981).

22 Foucault develops the idea of resistance to power in much of his later work, including *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (1980).

23 Bourdieu's corpus encompasses studies of numerous fields of intellectual and artistic production as well as social institutions such as class and education. His principal theoretical statements, however, are *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) and *The Logic of Practice* (1990).

24 In this he is quite close to Habermas and, before him, Horkheimer, who always associated knowledge with a 'knowledge-creating interest' *(erkentnissenteresse)*.

25 A case Bourdieu took up in *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (1996).

26 One aspect of Bourdieu's critique of market-centered neoliberalism is that it courts reduction of the autonomy of different fields to a genuinely low common denominator, thereby sacrificing many historical gains; see *Acts of Resistance* (1999a). This is at least superficially similar to Habermas' defense of the differentiation of value spheres, and it suggests a link between critical analysis and normative judgement, but it is not clear how far Bourdieu wishes to make this argument.

27 This essay tries to bridge the gap between his theory of power as a constituting 'matrix' of subjectivity and a much more conventional set of distinctions between applied power, 'objective capacities', and communication; the latter, he suggests, 'support one another reciprocally, and use each other mutually as means to an end'.

28 See Habermas, 1987b. Foucault, in essays and interviews, tends more toward a more normative description of political action and allows a greater role for such buffering mechanisms as rights than he does in his major writings.

CraigCalhoun, and JosephKaraganis

References

Adorno, Theodor, (1970)Aesthetic Theory (trans. C.Lenhardt). New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Adorno, Theodor, (1992)'Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda', in DavidIngram, and Julia-SimonIngram, (eds), Critical Theory: TheEssential Readings. St Paul, MN: Paragon, pp. 84–102

Adorno, Theodor, FrenkelBrunswick, Else, Levinson, DanielJ., and Sanford, R. Nevitt, (1950)The Authoritarian Personality. New York: Harper.

Barthes, Roland, (1973)Mythologies. New York: Noonday.

Baudrillard, J., (1975)The Mirror of Production. St Louis, MO: Telos Press.

Baudrillard, J., (1981)For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign. St Louis, MO: Telos Press.

Benhabib, Seyla, (1992)Situating the Self. New York: Routledge.

Benjamin, Walter, (1969)'Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in Illuminations: Walter Benjamin, Essays and Reflections (trans. HarryZohn). New York: Schocken Books.

Boudon, Raymond, (1974)The Logic of Sociological Explanation. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Bourdieu, Pierre(1977)Outline of a Theory of Practice (trans. R.Nice). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre, (1990)The Logic of Practice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre, (1996)The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre, (1999a)Acts of Resistance. New York: The New Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre, (1999b)The Weight of the World (trans. P.Ferguson). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

CalhounCraig'Populist Politics, Communications Media, and Large Scale Social Integration'*Sociological Theory*62219–411988

Calhoun, Craig, (1995)Critical Social Theory. Oxford: Blackwell.

Deleuze, Gilles, (1990)The Logic of Sense (trans. MarkLester). New York: Columbia University Press.

Foucault, Michel, (1970)The Order of Things. New York: Random House.

Foucault, Michel, ([1975] 1979)Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (trans. AlanSheridan). New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, Michel, (1980)Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, Michel, (1992)‘The Subject and Power’, in DavidIngram, and Julia-SimonIngram, (eds), Critical Theory: The Essential Readings. St Paul, MN: Paragon, pp. 303–19

Fraser, Nancy, (1992)‘What's Critical About Critical Theory?’, in DavidIngram, and Julia-SimonIngram, (eds), Critical Theory: The Essential Readings. St Paul, MN: Paragon, pp. 357–87

Gutman, A., (ed.) (1992)Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Habermas, Jiirgen, (1967)On the Logic of the Social Sciences. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Habermas, Jiirgen, (1971)Knowledge and Human Interests. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jiirgen, (1974)‘Some Difficulties in the Attempt to Link Theory and Praxis’, in Theory and Practice. London: Heinemann. pp. 1–40

Habermas, Jiirgen, (1979)Communication and the Evolution of Society. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jiirgen, (1984)The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jiirgen, (1987a)The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jiirgen, (1987b)The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (trans. FrederickLawrence). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Habermas, Jiirgen, (1989)The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Habermas, Jiirgen, (1992)‘Technology and Science as “Ideology”’, in DavidIngram, and Julia-SimonIngram, (eds), Critical Theory: The Essential Readings. St Paul, MN: Paragon, pp. 117–50

Habermas, Jiirgen, (1996)Between Facts and Norms. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Habermas, Jiirgen, (1998)The Inclusion of the Other. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Held, David, (1980)Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Honneth, Axel, (1996)The Struggle for Recognition. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

HorkheimerMax‘Art and Mass Culture’*Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*92290–3041941

Horkheimer, Max, (1992a)‘Means and Ends’, in DavidIngram, and Julia-SimonIngram, (eds), Critical Theory: The Essential Readings. St Paul, MN: Paragon, pp. 36–48

Horkheimer, Max, (1992b)‘Traditional and Critical Theory’, in DavidIngram, and Julia-SimonIngram, (eds), Critical Theory: The Essential Readings. St Paul, MN: Paragon, pp. 239–54

Horkheimer, Max, and Adorno, Theodor, (1987)Dialectic of Enlightenment (trans. Johndimming). New York: Continuum.

Jay, Martin, (1973)The Dialectical Imagination. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Lukács, Georg(1922)History and Class Consciousness. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lyotard, François(1984)The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (trans. GeoffBennington and BrianMassumi). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Marcuse, Herbert, (1960)Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, Herbert, (1970)‘Freedom and Freud's Theory of Instincts’, in Five Essays: Psychoanalysis, Politics, Utopia (trans. JeremyShapiro and ShierryWeber). Boston, MA: Beacon Press, pp. 1–27

Marcuse, Herbert, (1978)The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, Herbert, (1992)‘Philosophy and Critical Theory’, in DavidIngram, and Julia-SimonIngram, (eds), Critical Theory: The Essential Readings. St Paul, MN: Paragon, pp. 5–19

Marx, Karl, (1978)‘Theses on Feuerbach’, in The Marx-Engels Reader (ed. Robert C.Tucker). New York: W.W. Norton, pp. 143–5

McCarthy, Thomas(1991)Ideals and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Neumann, Franz, (1944)Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933–1944. New York: Harper Torchbooks.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, (1956)‘The Genealogy of Morals’, in The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals (trans. FrancisGolffing). Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

PollackFriedrich‘State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations’*Studies in Philosophy and Social Sciences*DC2200–251941

Postone, Moishe, (1993)Time, Labor and Social Domination. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wiggershaus, Rolf, (1994)The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- the frankfurt school
- critical theory
- totalitarianism
- culture industries
- state capitalism
- negativity
- negative dialectics

https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608351